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ABSTRACT

This field study was undertaken to investigate the relationship between the level of counselor self-actualization and student evaluation of the guidance program. The sample included counselors in 23 Ohio high schools who completed "Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory" (POI) and their respective 11th grade students who completed "Wysong's Guidance Program Evaluation Student Survey" (GPES). Selected scores on the POI and GPES were correlated. Guidance programs which received a high rating by students tended to be administered by counselors who received high scores on the POI. It is suggested that counselor sex, age, and type and extent of graduate training should also be correlated with student evaluation of the guidance program. Recommendations for future research are made. (Author)

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A Study of Counselor Mental Health as It Relates to Student Perception of Guidance Services

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The study of counselor personality has been the focal point of research by counselor-educators for more than twenty-five years (Hill & Green, 1960; Stripling & Lister, 1963). Polmantier (1966) suggested in 1947 and again in 1966 that there is a need for research dealing with personal characteristics of the counselor. Polmantier (1966:95) concluded ". . . that there is much yet to be known about the personal characteristics of counselors, as well as the significance of these characteristics for success in counseling." Cottle (1953:449) in commenting on how these personal characteristics could be measured, stated: "Interest inventories and structured personality inventories.

The expectations and demands placed upon the counselor who is working in a public secondary school differ from those placed upon practicum students and college counselors. The distinction between success as a counselor-trainee or practicum student and on-the-job success must be considered. Warnath, as quoted by Hill and Green (1960:117) suggested ". . . that the kinds of characteristics valued in the training setting were not always the same as those needed on the job later." According to Jackson and Thompson (1971) a limitation of previous research in counseling has been the use of counselors-intraining rather that experienced counselors as subjects. Public school counselors working in the field have tended to be overlooked as research subjects.

Researchers have also tended to ignore students as a source of input for the evaluation of guidance programs (Jenson, 1955). In studies where student input has been used, it has generally

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been limited to surveying only those students who received direct service. In reality this represented only a small portion of students for whom the counselor was responsible. Research investigating the effect of the counseling interview is necessary. In the past, the effect of the entire guidance program has tended to be ignored as a subject for investigation.

It would appear from the reviews of the literature by Walton and Sweeney (1969) and Hill and Green (1960) that where recipients of counseling have been employed as judges of counselor effectiveness they have tended to be limited to the clinical setting rather than the school. Where students in the school setting have judged the effectiveness of the counselor it has been limited to only those students who received counseling. Clearly the job of the school counselor is not limited to only those students who receive individual counseling.

There seems to be a wealth of studies which have correlated the results of counselor completed personality instruments with supervisor or client rating of the counseling relationship or client satisfaction (Demos & Zuwaylif, 1966; Form, 1953; Foulds, 1969b; Pellegreno, 1968; Price & Iverson, 1969). There have also been several recent studies which have surveyed student attitudes toward counseling in particular and guidance programs in general (Form, 1953; Jenson, 1955; Tipton, 1969; Wortman, 1969). Most of the research which deals with counselor personality has been conducted in a university setting. There is a limited amount of research which deals with counselor personality which has been conducted in the field.

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To some extent, both counselor personality and student perception of the guidance program have been investigated separately. There appears to be virtually no research which has correlated counselor personality with student evaluation of their guidance program. It is, therefore, appropriate and necessary to investigate the relationship between counselor personality and student perception of their guidance program. This investigation attempted to answer the question: What is the relationship between counselor self-actualization and student evaluation of the guidance program?

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Subjects

The sample for this study included counselors in twenty-three schools who satisfactorily completed the POI and their respective eleventh grade students who satisfactorily completed the GPES. The group of twenty-three counselors represented those volunteers who were among the 114 counselors listed in the Directory of Ohio School Counselors (Frericks, 1970) as the only counselor employed in their high school which was located within 125 miles of Toledo. There were 16 male and 7 female counselors. Twenty were certified and three were not certified as guidance counselors in the State of Ohio. The average years of experience as a counselor was five. Of the 1,898 student completed Guidance Program Evaluation Students Surveys (GPES), 1,658 were usable. The GPES was administered to all of the 11th grade students in each of the participating schools with a mean of 72.08 students in each school.

Instruments

Guidance Program Evaluation Student Survey - Form A-4 (GPES). The instrument used in this study is a revised version of the GPES dated November, 1971. It contains 105 multiple choice items. The categories of the GPES, according to Wysong (1971:6) are:

A. Guidance Program Activities and Provisions

B. Guidance Objectives

C. Verification

D. Identification of persons in school who are regarded as the most helpful in assisting students to accomplish guidance objectives

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E. Semantic Differential

F. Rating of Importance of five kinds of counselor assistance

For the purposes of this investigation, Category A was subdivided into two categories. Items originally in Scale A-1, which was labeled Individual Counseling and Perceptions of the Counselor, were placed in Category A_1. Items in Scales A-2 to A-7 were placed in Category A_{2-7}. The change was made at Wysong's (1971c) recommendation. Wysong believed that the items in Scale A-1 as a group more closely measured some of the underlying constructs of the POI. By converting Scale A-1 to Category A_1 it was possible to correlate it along with the other categories of the GPES with the combined T_C and I score of the POI.

The Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) which was developed by Shostrom (1964, 1966) is conceptually related to Maslow's writings on self-actualization as well as humanistic, existentialist and Gestalt psychology. The POI consists of 105 two-choice items which are scored twice, first, according to the two basic scales, Time Compentent and Inner-Directed. The second time they are scored according to ten subscales. The Time Competent individual may be characterized as living in the here and now and having placed into proper perspective past experiences and future plans. The inner-directed individual may be characterized as one who has a flexible set of principles by which he lives. His behavior is guided primarily by this set of internalized principles as opposed to external influences.

In several recent studies where the POI has been used, the two basic scales have been combined to yield a single index

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of self-actualization (Foulds, 1967; Winborn and Rowe, 1972). Damm (1969:981) suggested that "an overall measure of the POI can probably be best obtained by using the raw score of the I (inner-directed) or by the combining the raw scores of the I and T_C (Time-Competent) Scales." For the purposes of this study, the combined T_C and I scores were used as a single index of level of counselor self-actualization.

Procedures

The counselors who were invited to participate were initially selected on the basis of their schools' geographic proximity to Toledo, Ohio. This was accomplished through the use of selected telephone area codes which are within 125 miles of Toledo and within the state of Ohio. The counselors were selected on the basis of the telephone area code of their schools as listed in the Directory of Ohio School Counselors (Frericks, 1970). In order to qualify for participation in this study, each counselor must have been employed in a school which had at least one three-quarters time counselor and no more than one full-time and one half-time counselor.

A letter was sent to each of the 114 counselors who met the criteria stated above. The second mailing, which was sent to the thirty-five counselors who indicated an interest, requested the counselor to agree to participate and obtain from his principal written permission to administer the GPES. Twenty-four obtained written permission and twenty-three completed the administration of the instruments satisfactorily. The counselors participating

in this study assumed the responsibility of administering the GPES to their entire eleventh grade class, self-administer the POI and return by mail all of the completed testing materials.

The scores on five categories and the grand mean of the Guidance Program Evaluation Student Survey were correlated with the combined T_C and I score of the Personal Orientation Inventory for all twenty-three schools. The grand mean of the GPES served as an overall index of student perception of the entire guidance program. A t-test to determine whether the Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation differed significantly from zero was computed with alpha set at .05 for each of the correlations.

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Table 1.

Matrix of Correlations between Selected Scales of the Personal Orientation Inventory with the Categories of the Guidance Program Evaluation Student Survey

GPES Categories	Personal Orientation Inventory Scales		
	T_C+I	T_C	I
A_1	.24	.39*	.15
A_{2-7}	.38*	.52**	.26
B	.10	.35***	.02
D	.56**	.44*	.52**
E	.33	.35***	.28
Grand Mean	.35*	.51**	.24

*Significant at .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

***Not significant at 3 decimal places

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RESULTS

Correlation coefficients of the relationship between the separate as well as combined POI scales of T_C and I and the categories and grand mean of the GPES are reported in Table 1. There was a significant positive correlation between Category A_1 of the GPES with T_C of the POI ($r=.39$, $p < .05$) which indicates that the more the counselor appeared to live in the here and now the more the students tended to assign a high rating to Individual Counseling and Perceptions of the Counselor.

There was a significant positive correlation between Category A_{2-7} of the GPES with T_C + I of the POI ($r=.52$, $p < .01$) which indicates that the more the counselor appeared to live in the here and now the more the students tended to assign a high rating to the Guidance Program Activities and Provisions.

For purposes of this study, the preferred response to items in Category D was Counselor." Items in this category ask the student to identify the individual who has been the source of assistance in various areas. The correlation between Category D of the GPES with T_C + I of the POI was .56 ($p < .01$). This finding indicates that the more the counselor appeared self-actualized, the more the students tended to identify the counselor as a source of assistance.

In addition to the results cited above, there were significant positive correlations between Category D of the GPES with T_C of the POI ($r=.44$, $p < .05$) and with I of the POI ($r=.52$, $p < .01$) which indicate that the more the counselor appeared to live in

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the here and now and be inner-directed rather than outer-directed the more the students tended to view the counselor as a source of assistance in meeting the guidance objectives.

The grand mean serves as an overall index of student perception of the entire guidance program. The correlation between the grand mean of the GPES with T_C + I of the POI was .35 ($p < .05$). This finding indicates that the more the counselor appeared self-actualized the higher the students tended to rate the entire guidance program. There was a significant positive correlation between the grand mean of the GPES with T_C of the POI ($r=.51$, $p < .01$) which indicates that the more the counselor appeared to live in the here and now the more the students tended to assign a high overall rating of the entire guidance program.

In summary, the more the counselor tended to appear to be self-actualized the more the students tended to assign a high rating to: (1) the Guidance Program Activities and Provisions (A_{2-7}); (2) the identification of the counselor as a source of assistance (D), and; (3) the overall success of the guidance program (grand mean). There were no significant correlations between counselor self-actualization as measured by the combined score of T_C and I of the POI with the following three categories of the GPES: (1) Individual Counseling and Perceptions of the Counselor (A_1): (2) Guidance Objectives (B), and; (3) Semantic Differential Items Used to Rate Generally the Guidance Program (E).

DISCUSSION

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The more self-actualized the counselor as measured by the POI the more likely the students were to assign a high rating to the school guidance program on the GPES. However, the Time-Competent scale accounted for more significant correlations when computed separately than when combined with the I scale. This would suggest that the more the counselor appeared to live in the here and now the more his students tended to assign him high ratings on several of the GPES categories. The school environment may likely influence the counselor's behavior. It was beyond the scope of this study to control for or identify how each counselor implemented his own particular guidance program. Nevertheless, the Time-Competent individual may be characterized as effectively dealing with the present without being rigidly bound to the past or overly concerned about the future. It is possible that the school setting reinforces the individual with such characteristics. Being responsive to the needs and expectations of the students may perpetuate Time-Competant counselor behavior.

Surprisingly, Category A_1 which was believed to most closely measure some of the underlying constructs of the POI was not significantly correlated with the combined T_C score alone. It is possible that the individual whose observable behavior is consistent with the value of Time-Competence may be perceived as highly visable to those around him whereas those characteristics associated with the inner-directed individual are not as conspicuous.

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The Personal Orientation Inventory is divided into two basic scales, i.e., Time-Competent and Inner-Directed. The T_C scale, to this writer, appears to measure a personal construct which is not as unique as that measured by the Inner-Directed scale. It seems as though our culture places a greater premium on being able to deal with the here and now than being inner-directed.

The inner-directed individual is characterized as being guided by an internalized set of principles. The inner-directed person is spontaneous; open to his own experiences and feelings as well as those of others; possesses the capacity for intimate contact and is able to reach out and touch the lives of others in a meaningful and selfless manner. The inner-directed person is contrasted with the outer-directed individual whose values are largely derived from those around him. Although the qualities cited above in reference to the inner-directed individual seem to this writer to be desirable, one must wonder whether our culture in general values an individual who possesses them.

The GPES seems to be an excellent instrument to measure student perception of the guidance program. The focus of this study was upon the use of all students in the eleventh grade without regard to whether or not they had received direct service from the counselor. The input was not limited to those few individuals who received individual or small group counseling. The perceptions of "all students" may be different from the perceptions of those few students who know the counselor best because they have had individual long-term counseling.

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The use of students as a source of input is relatively rare in the area of guidance program evaluations. There have been virtually no studies where the results of student perception of guidance programs have been correlated with counselor personality. Thus, the findings of this study have tended to produce more questions yet to be answered than actual answers. The need for extensive research concerning the efficacy and value of guidance program is obvious. It would seem wise to separate the surveys of those students who did receive individual counseling from those who did not in the correlational analyses so as to determine whether student perception is affected by intensive contact with the counselor and if so, in what ways.

Students should not be the only source of input in terms of evaluating guidance programs. Administrators, guidance counselors, parents and teachers should also participate. The results of the surveys completed by such diverse groups should be correlated with counselor personality.

School environments vary considerably as do the expectations placed upon counselors. Field research should attempt to hold constant the nature of the counselors' activities and the organizational structure of the school during such investigations. Knowledge of what roles and functions the counselor performs would facilitate the interpretation of consumer completed surveys.

It is possible that counselor age, sex and type of graduate training influence his performance on the job and therefore his students' perceptions of the guidance program. Not only should the relationship between the age and sex of the student with student perception of the guidance program. The surveys of male and female students be separately correlated with counselor personality.

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Several specific questions which might be investigated are: Do individuals with a certain type of POI profile meet with greater success as counselors in the schools? What effect do counselor education programs which emphasize personal growth have upon perceived counselor competence? To what extent does the school environment intluence the degree to which the counselor may appear to be inner-directed? Is the concept of self-actualization a practical and legitimate goal of counselor education programs? These questions warrant further research.

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